

COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION/INFORMATION SYSTEMS

February 18, 2004

5:15 PM

In the absence of the Chairman, Deputy City Clerk Johnson called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Gatsas, Osborne and Lopez

Absent: Aldermen Forest and Porter

Messrs: Steve Tellier, Tom Nichols, Kevin Clougherty, Tom Arnold,
Kevin Dillon

On a motion of Alderman Lopez, duly seconded by Alderman Osborne, it was voted to elect Alderman Gatsas as Chairman Pro-Tem.

Deputy City Clerk Johnson stated I would indicate that we have had a request that Item 4 be taken up first.

Chairman Pro-Tem Gatsas addressed Item 4 of the agenda:

4. Communication from Aldermen Osborne and Shea submitting a resolution increasing the Veterans Property Tax Credit.

Board of Assessors Chairman Steve Tellier stated I do have extra copies if you didn't bring the reports that we sent out on Tuesday. I will go through very briefly on the report that's submitted before you. The cover letter explains what has been submitted. On the third page of that cover letter is a spreadsheet that will show you in \$100 increments and one at \$250, what the cost is to the City of Manchester. As you can see on the spreadsheet, we presently give under the optional Veterans exemption we give \$100 exemption to Veterans who qualify and to qualify they have to have been honorably discharged and served under a specific theater of operation, such as World War II, Korean War, Gulf War, and there are other theaters of operation that are identified by State statute.

Chairman Pro-Tem Gatsas asked all you need to bring is a...?

Mr. Tellier answered DD2-14.

Chairman Pro-Tem Gatsas asked that's all and that qualifies you?

Mr. Tellier answered they have to show proof of residency. As you can see under the simplified spreadsheet before you, we currently give \$100. The current cost in the City's budget for this Veterans credit is \$383,100. There are 3,831 Veterans that are qualified and enjoying that Veteran's credit. If you go to the right, you'll see that it's in \$200 increments except for the \$250. Under that third line you'll see \$383,100 for the \$100 and then...it's simple math; \$760,000 if you go to \$200; at \$250 the cost to the City would rise to \$957,750; \$300, \$400, and \$500. If you go to \$500, the cost to the City would rise to \$1.9 million. Almost \$2 million. We're talking about \$0.37 - \$0.38 on the tax rate. Underneath that is the disabled Veterans, those that are 100 percent totally disabled as identified by the Veteran's Administration. We presently have 153 disabled Veterans; the cost to the City is \$214,000; as identified on the spreadsheet the cost to go to \$2,000 is negligible at \$91,000. If you split the difference of \$200, it is \$30,000. So as you can see, the cost is minimal for the disabled Veteran's adjustment. What else was handed out to you under this shaded spreadsheet before you, what I did was acquired the Department of Revenue Administration's Exemptions and Veteran's Criteria statewide. Listed before you are all of the 13 cities and the larger southern tier communities. On this spreadsheet we'll show you the exemptions that are given out under all of those communities, the blind exemption, disabled exemption, and the Veteran's and the disabled Veteran's credits. The purpose was to show that Manchester is comparable to other municipalities within the State. Certainly this is a very high profile item for those that receive this benefit. This was put forward simply for information to judge how Manchester treats its citizens with respect to other communities. But I would like to draw your attention to is the cities are emboldened with a dot and if you look, I know it's hard to see, but in italics those communities I've listed what they have either on a petitioned ballot or they just passed by referendum. And you'll find that most of the communities have in fact increased their Veteran's credits benefit by either a minimum of a couple of hundred bucks or in some instances they're going up to \$500 over a period of years. Also submitted to you is the forms that we use internally that we give out to the public to qualify individuals; our exemption and disability qualification sheet and a copy of the State Board of Tax and Land Appeal qualification form that we are mandated to keep on file. And with that, I'd like to offer ourselves to answer any questions the committee may have.

Chairman Pro-Tem Gatsas stated I think that obviously, again I applauded Alderman Shea and Alderman Osborne, but I think that these exemptions are close and dear to my heart because I put the Senate Bill 45 that allowed these exemptions to happen. And I think it's important that 1) we not only include the Veterans, but we start talking about where we are with the seniors. They should be part of this exemption process and I guess I would look for the Assessor to do a comparable of at least Nashua in the categories of exemption amounts and income limits along with asset limits, to see what those changes would change the City's requirement or maybe if Alderman Lopez, Alderman Osborne, I don't know what your feelings are. Do you want to look at anything else? Other than that I can tell you that Hooksett has just implemented an unlimited asset limit as of August 1st.

Mr. Tellier replied that's correct Alderman and we have spoken briefly about that. In my cover letter I've itemized that I've spoken personnel from Hooksett. We're expecting to receive from them what their criteria was before, what the impact to the tax base was, and by the end of the month they should know how many are qualified by opening it up as an unlimited category, by the end of this month they expect to be able to share with us what that change to the impact to the tax base would be. We could possibly use that as a reference point in a percentage reference. Obviously we're comparing Hooksett to Manchester are apples and oranges, but with respect to the impact to the tax base, we might be able to use that as a measure of comparison.

Alderman Lopez stated you said unlimited. Give us a little bit more information.

Mr. Tellier stated they put unlimited...you have a few criteria in the exemptions. One is a residency requirement, then you have income requirements, for single or married, and then you have an asset requirement. Recently during the last revaluation, the Board of Mayor and Aldermen felt that it was appropriate to be a little more generous to the elderly in the City of Manchester, they increased the asset limit from \$35,000 to \$75,000 and they increased the income by using Consumer Price Indexes and Social Security increases over the years to come up with the present income and asset limits. With respect to Alderman Gatsas' question on what the analysis may be, the only thing that we have to point to is the last time we changed, and we doubled it. We went from \$35,000 in the asset limit to \$75,000, it pretty much doubled...it went from \$68 million in exemptions to approximately \$130 million. Currently our exemptions are about \$140 million as of today. So for every \$10 million in additional value that reduced from the tax base, it's about a nickel on the rate. So following Alderman Gatsas' we could certainly do a simplified spreadsheet like we did with the Veteran's credit to address to the best that we can for an estimate. But it's pretty hard to have some hard data on that.

Alderman Lopez stated and that's where I'm going. I don't quite see it. Because when we talked about this and we raised the asset limit and the exemptions and went to \$75,000, what you just said to me, if I have a \$100,000 or \$150,000 we could do that in Manchester if we elect to do that. So it doesn't make a difference how much money you have in the bank.

Mr. Tellier stated if you were to go to an unlimited...in other words, if you were to go to unlimited in the asset category, what we would be able to state categorically is that there would be a significant impact to the tax base. Because it would open it up to a larger degree of the elderly, obviously.

Alderman Lopez stated and we increased it quite a bit when we went to \$75,000.

Mr. Tellier responded we would say at this juncture that \$35,000 previously was pretty meager and it was certainly appropriate for this Board to increase the assets to \$75,000. No question about that.

Alderman Lopez stated going back to the Veteran's exemption. Some of these towns you mentioned, and maybe I missed it here someplace...are some of these towns going one, two and three years to get up to the \$500?

Mr. Tellier answered that's correct Alderman. There are several towns and I apologize that if you want me find out exactly which ones they are, I can go back into my notes and then follow back. But there are several towns that what they've done is go up in \$100 increments over a period of several years to have less of an impact to each consecutive years' budget. Ultimately, Alderman, to go up to the \$500 maximum of providing for by Senate Bill 45.

Alderman Lopez asked are you familiar with the 100% disability, as to what that actually means in Veteran's terms?

Mr. Tellier answered actually, to be honest with you, we are not. We're currently setting up an appointment with representatives from the Veteran's Administration to get more criteria and get better educated as to the subtleties involved on whether you're partially disabled or 100% disabled. My colleagues on the Board and myself are not fully versed as to what the criteria is for the Veteran's Administration term of disabled.

Alderman Lopez asked but to get this credit here you have to be 100% disabled?

Mr. Tellier answered what we do know is that the Veteran's Administration provides for us documentation that states categorically the words "one hundred percent totally disabled" and that's the criteria Assessor's statewide have been using to assist in qualifying people for the disabled Veteran's credit.

Chairman Pro-Tem Gatsas stated obviously the...how many people have come to you for elderly exemptions that don't qualify because of the asset limit?

Board of Assessor Member Tom Nichols answered I can say over the last couple of years at least 25 to 35 have not qualified on the asset limit. They qualify as far as income, but the assets are too high, so that's why they don't qualify. There is about 25 to 35 every year.

Chairman Pro-Tem Gatsas asked how close are they to the asset...obviously if we increased the asset limit to \$150,000 that certainly would open the range up a little bit more? I think what you need to do is take a look at 1) the unlimited. I think that may be because of our size here that may be a number that may be not palatable at this time. But maybe we need to take a look at a range of going from \$75,000 to \$150,000...

Mr. Tellier interjected possibly in increments like we did with the Veteran's credit?

Chairman Pro-Tem Gatsas continued and then \$150,000 to \$250,000 and see what those numbers would look like. Because I think anybody with assets over \$250,000...

Mr. Tellier interjected at this point to answer what we might be able to do for projections, is we would look to Nashua first of all to see what their criteria was before and then afterwards when they raised it to \$200,000 to find out what that impact was, because Nashua is very comparable to Manchester. And then we would make some estimates based on that.

Chairman Pro-Tem Gatsas stated let me give you a little bit more of a task and you may want to write this down. Let's take a look, because I believe that anybody that's 80 years old or plus, at some point needs to...whether their asset limit is \$100,000 or \$75,000 should be getting some sort of break because chances are they're on a fixed income and they've been paying taxes for an awful long time. So maybe we look at 80+ as the number of unlimited, because the legislation allows us to do that, based on any category any way we want to devise it.

Mr. Tellier asked with respect to that Alderman, we've called a legal counsel at NH Municipal Association because we understood that there was some intent by several Senators and Representatives to try to accomplish that. When we read Senate Bill 45 and we called the NH Municipal Association to find out what their reading was, it is our understanding that the present language in Senate Bill 45 provides for different income levels for the three brackets but that the asset limit has to be the same in all three.

Chairman Pro-Tem Gatsas stated well I can tell you the intent of the legislation, and that's what we all talked about in Concord, is intent. The intent of that legislation was to allow us the availability of moving the income limits and the asset limits to whatever it was enabling at the local level. So if that's what they're telling you, I will meet with the Municipal Association tomorrow because there's a bill right now that's before us that if the intent is not clear enough, we can spell it out.

Mr. Tellier responded I think that would be productive, Alderman, to have that discussion and get some feedback from NHMA to corroborate or further refine what I understand. We've also got a letter to our City Solicitor to ask his feedback on that too, because we were of the understanding that there were several members that wished to have different criteria in the asset category and when I got the final version of Senate Bill 45, it didn't appear to have that. So we're just trying to find that out.

Chairman Pro-Tem Gatsas stated let's have you look at 80+ as unlimited, because I'm sure the legislation...if the interpretation is not there, the intent was there and if we've got to clarify that intent that can be done in a very quick manner because there's a piece of legislation that certainly is worthy of the amendment. I don't know if anybody else has anything else they'd like to look at.

Mr. Tellier stated before we end that, let me encapsulate what you're asking for, Alderman. You're looking for some sort of spreadsheet or estimate, a projection, to increase the asset limit from \$75,000 to possibly \$150,000 and then to \$200,000 as well, and to \$250,000.

Chairman Pro-Tem Gatsas interjected not \$200,000. \$150,000 and \$250,000 in the asset category and then 80 and over unlimited.

Mr. Tellier stated I'll do my best. As far as the 80 and over unlimited, that may be very hard to quantify. As I wrote in our cover letter, the demographic information out there, the data that's available, is very difficult to identify how many 80 and over own their own home. The only thing we could do at this point is possibly get some census data that might lend that.

Chairman Pro-Tem Gatsas stated but it certainly will allow you to understand that the 80+ that you have, if you have 50 people participating now...

Mr. Nichols interjected we have 618 right now.

Chairman Pro-Tem Gatsas asked so is it going to triple? That obviously is a number...

Mr. Tellier stated as Tom Nichols just said he has recognized that there's approximately 25 to 35 that qualify under the present income criteria, but their assets are just a little bit high. So if we were to use that as just an estimate, and we ratcheted up the assets, we could compute that as an estimate, but that's all it would be is an estimate.

Mr. Nichols stated the majority of these don't qualify as husband and wife. Because you give one asset limit as husband and wife as the same asset limit for the single person. Also with the income, the income is for husband and wife, that's only \$34,400 and for the single person it's \$24,400. So maybe the income of the married couples should be lifted a little bit.

Alderman Lopez stated I think you've got to look at the whole picture and not the separation here.

Mr. Tellier stated Alderman, as a response to that, the implications to the budget are significant. That's what we tried to outline that on our spreadsheet on the Veteran's credits, because its important to note that Veteran's credits, this is a cash line that the Board of Mayor and Aldermen budget has to allocate for. So presently the total between the strict Veteran's and the disabled Veteran's amount to about \$575,000, that that line item has to be plugged in in cash. So any increase that's allocated towards those Veteran's credits has to be allocated on the budget in a cash line. With the exemptions, that's a value. That's attributed to a value reduction. So the impact is somewhat lessened because it's distributed over a larger base.

Alderman Lopez stated I think most people know how I feel about the Veteran's and I want to thank the Senator for sponsoring the bill. It's high time that the Veteran's do get a break. There's no question in my mind.

Mr. Nichols stated as far as the Veteran's credits go, we're going to have to know this as soon as possible and the Aldermen are going to have to know this for the budget.

Alderman Lopez stated I was just going to say that and I think that I'm going to leave...

Chairman Pro-Tem Gatsas interjected I think we'll know them all for the budget.

Alderman Lopez stated we'll need to know them all.

Mr. Tellier stated it won't take long. We'll respond to Alderman Gatsas' request on the exemptions expeditiously.

Chairman Pro-Tem Gatsas stated also moving the income limits...\$30,000 for a single and \$60,000 married. Nashua is at \$36,000 for both, which doesn't make much sense. Is that correct?

Mr. Tellier answered that is correct. This is what we got and I verified this with the municipalities.

Chairman Pro-Tem Gatsas asked is that \$36,000 per?

Mr. Tellier answered it is \$36,000 for each, whether they're single or married. You're reading it correctly. What I may offer is possibly we could apply the same...the last reval was in 2001, possibly we could at least identify what the consumer price index increases were and Social Security increases and then look at what the other comparable towns are.

Chairman Pro-Tem Gatsas asked why don't we just give you a couple of numbers instead of you...why don't we just look at \$30,000 and \$50,000? How's that?

Alderman Lopez stated I noticed that Bedford is \$50,000 for married couples.

Mr. Tellier stated I can assure you though that if we go to \$30,000 and \$50,000, those projections would raise dramatically and if you're looking at Bedford, the per capita income for a Bedford resident compared to a per capita income for a resident of Manchester, I think would be substantially different. I'm just throwing that out for discussion.

Chairman Pro-Tem Gatsas does somebody have a different number?

Alderman Osborne stated we could stick \$40,000 in there for both.

Alderman Lopez stated we've got \$24,000 to \$34,000. I think the married couples ought to go up.

Mr. Tellier asked \$30,000 and \$40,000? \$30,000 and \$45,000?

Chairman Pro-Tem Gatsas stated \$30,000 and \$45,000.

Alderman Lopez stated I could go along with that. Do you want to wait on the Veteran's numbers?

Chairman Pro-Tem Gatsas answered yes I think we ought to wait and package them all together so that we are on the same page.

Alderman Lopez asked do we have a time limit for them to do this?

Mr. Tellier stated we'll get this out within the next couple of weeks and you'll have it...possibly we'll get this to you within a week and it will give you time to do some your own investigation on what you think budgetary considerations, for the next meeting. You already everything you need on the Veteran's, so what we're expecting to do is bring the exemption information back to you.

Chairman Pro-Tem Gatsas stated put the Veteran's on the same sheet so that we're looking at everything before us.

Mr. Tellier stated we will duplicate it again.

On motion of Alderman Osborne, duly seconded by Alderman Lopez, it was voted to have the Board of Assessors work up their numbers on the income and asset limits for elderly single and married couples, using \$30,000 for single and \$45,000 for married couples, along with the Veteran's credits report back to this committee and to table this item pending the report.

Chairman Pro-Tem Gatsas addressed Item 3 of the agenda:

Communication from Alderman Lopez suggesting the Board refer two Charter Amendment questions to the Committee on Administration for review and report back to the Board.

Alderman Lopez stated this is regarding the internal audit that we testified before the Charter Commission that we wanted to change it.

Finance Officer Kevin Clougherty stated just a little bit of background. In the early 1970's in the City of Manchester, there were two separate positions. There was a City Auditor position and that position would carry out what you would normally associate with an auditor. And there was a City Treasurer position,

which was a separate position and they carried out a treasury function. The City of Manchester went up and got special legislation passed that took the Auditor position, the Treasurer position and put them into one position called a Finance Officer, which also had under State law, control of functions. So that passed in chapter law, came down and got passed as part of the Charter down here, so since the 1970's the Finance Officer for the City of Manchester is the auditor, comptroller and treasurer. Now ever since I've been here we've been going before the Charter Commissions and internal reorganization committees of the Board to say that doesn't sound like the best mix of functions that you want to have. That you should separate out at the very least the audit function so that it's done independently. Now we've never been able to get that passed. So I remain somewhat of a conflict in these three functions. Now the way that we've handled it internally is, we have a separate treasury function, we have separate comptroller operation and we have an internal auditor who carries out the audit functions, and as you know as you heard last night, we have an external audit performed by an independent contractor. What is recommended here is to try and take that audit function and make it really make it a legislative function that should, in my opinion, report to the Aldermen. Then you'd have the comptroller like you have in the State. You have a Commissioner of Administration then you have your Treasurers, which are more of an administrative function that reports to the Mayor. The thinking is to try and back to the checks and balances. Just like in the Federal government you have the congressional budget office is a congressional function. It's a legislative function, to make sure that policies are working. That's where the audit. At the State, the State Auditor, the LBA, works for the legislature. Doesn't report to the Governor, just like the General Accounting Office doesn't report to the President. It's a legislative function. So on the municipal level we tried to see if that can be done. So I'm not opposed to realigning this, I'm not opposed to having it straightened out in the Charter, my problem is is the way that it's worded doesn't quite get you there. What you've got proposed is that you take what we've created an Ordinance called the Internal Auditor and did that. If you did that, I would still remain under statute and under Charter, the City Auditor. So I think you really have to get the basic problem. It is the intent of the Board that you want to take more of a turn towards the legislative function and more of a separation. I'd like to recommend that you refer the questions to the City Solicitor so that we could get that wording straight to make sure that the function is separated totally the way it should be. So you're not left with an internal audit function and I'm still the Auditor, and you've got even more conflict than you have now.

Alderman Lopez stated that was what the intent was. To take the Auditor position out of Finance...

Mr. Clougherty interjected not the position, Alderman. The position isn't the issue. It is the function. I have the functional responsibility and under this proposal you're dealing with the position, so that's why I'd like to have the Solicitor look at it so if you want to move on it, at least its worded properly.

Alderman Lopez stated that's correct and I would send it to him so the right wording could be appropriated, so it would be a Charter amendment. And I realize it is not in the proper form here.

Mr. Clougherty stated and I think you probably lifted that from the Charter Commission this year, who didn't get it right. Even though we tried to explain it a couple of times. It was a good effort and we appreciated it, but it didn't quite get you to where you want to be, I don't think.

Alderman Lopez stated that's the intent is both of these Charter amendments to go the City Solicitor to put the right terminology that we want to amend, which is the auditor. And the second thing in reference to the amendment to the City Charter was a lot of people did not see the names of the candidates that were running for political office. Of course, we all know that if you had no opposition you're name is not in the Primary Election, but there was a confusion factor when people went to the polls and I'm hoping the committee, I don't know if the committee experienced any of this or not, but I know I have experienced a lot of that the people want to see the candidates name on there in the Primary not just...

Chairman Pro-Tem Gatsas stated I understand where you're coming from and I can appreciate that is. The problem is let's assume for a second that in the Aldermen At-Large position you only have four people that are going. That means that those four people are going to appear on the ballot and you're suggesting that in the Primary, not that you're suggesting, but I would assume that people are going to cast a vote. Even though that vote really doesn't mean anything until the General Election.

Alderman Lopez replied correct. It is just like two Aldermen, one Alderman running and they are going to get the votes in the Primary or two Aldermen running and one gets more votes than the other, it doesn't matter either. Only the point that I'm making is that people are so used to going to the polls in the Primary and a lot of people go there to vote for the candidate that they want and with being on the Charter Commission, which I instituted part of the nine Commissioners to do away with it, thinking that it would serve a great purpose. A purpose is that you do not have to spend as much money if you don't have opposition, but it's confusing to the voter who really wants to vote because of the publicity

Chairman Pro-Tem Gatsas stated I can tell you that it's going to cost candidates a heck of a lot more money because if Alderman Osborne beats Alderman Lopez by two votes and Alderman Gatsas by three, there's going to be an awful lot of spending of money to try and achieve the additional votes that you need in an election. Again, it depends on...I hear what you're saying, I can appreciate where you're going, but I can see it as being an added expense if you've got four people and everybody is vying for a position and this money being spent.

Alderman Lopez stated on the other amendment if you want to discuss it a little bit more. You bring up a good point. It's just that I'm looking out for the people that go vote.

Chairman Pro-Tem Gatsas stated Alderman, I don't disagree with you because I hear the same. Now whether you place both names on the ballot and don't have them have an opportunity to vote...

Alderman Lopez stated maybe we can ask the City Clerk for any comments in reference to the voting. Did you have many complaints understanding when people went there to vote or is it more work?

Deputy City Clerk Johnson asked in terms of a Primary [Election]?

Alderman Lopez answered yes.

Deputy City Clerk Johnson answered we do receive calls from people...there is some confusion by the voters who expect to go to the polls and find names on the ballot. In terms of work, we're producing the ballot anyway. If you have more candidates than two for an Aldermanic office or four for an Alderman At-Large or School Board, those names would have to appear on the ballot anyway, so you really not adding a whole lot to the cost of the ballot. I think it would be a minimal additional cost. I guess I'm understanding both points and I'm not really taking a position on either side of it. Cost wise I don't see it as a major impact, voter wise I think it's less confusing to the voters, but then again, you are inciting more spending probably by campaigns, without a doubt.

On motion of Alderman Lopez moved, duly seconded by Alderman Osborne, it was voted that the City Solicitor work on correct legal terminology for the two amendments to the City Charter that will brought before the full Board.

Deputy City Clerk Johnson stated the Chairman has arrived. Do you want to recognize him to take over the meeting?

Alderman Forest stated my apology gentlemen for being late, but why don't we continue with Alderman Gatsas and I'll just follow along for now. That is the wish of the Chairman.

Chairman Pro-Tem Gatsas stated while we're on that topic I have a question of the Solicitor in regards to a poll standing. Is that an Ordinance or is that a...is that something that we need to send to the voters or is it something that the Board can take up on its own? The reason why I ask this is because there is no question that when people stand at the polls it's because your opponent stands at the polls. If we said there was no poll standing for 300 feet of the polls, I think it would make life very much more comfortable for the voter and allow them to go in and do what they want without having everybody hanging on their neck trying to get that last gasp situation in there. Again, I think it's for the voter having an opportunity because sometimes you walk into these wards and it's a feeling of walking into a gauntlet.

Alderman Osborne stated I'd like to also see the signs in front of the polls. I think I'd like to move them out 300 feet as well. Nothing in front of the polls at all. I think signs are very distracting, I think they're annoying, and there's no need for them right in front of the polls. You've got enough signs out on lots and everything else. Ninety percent of the people that go out to vote know who they are voting for anyway. You might get a couple of stragglers, but not enough to win. I'd like to see the signs away from the polls as well.

Alderman Forest stated I have a comment on that also and I think we all agree that people with signs are a pain. Tom is there anything we as a committee can suggest through you or through a motion? Because I know I've questioned it in my ward and I know all of the Aldermen have questioned it in their ward, and the answer I always get is that it is up to the ward Moderator. There is no real conformity to where the signs are, where the people are, and everything else. Is there anything we can do as a Board?

Chairman Pro-Tem Gatsas stated that's not true. There's an Ordinance.

Alderman Forest asked is that mainly enforcement then?

Deputy City Solicitor answered what I would suggest is the State laws in this area have changed over the years. I would want to research the State statutes to make sure that anything here suggested in not in conflict with those State statutes and then come back.

Chairman Pro-Tem Gatsas asked what about local control? The State does not intervene in that?

Alderman Osborne stated I think we're talking local here only.

Alderman Forest stated I think we're talking more than just the signs at the polls. These candidates come in; not only local candidates, but also we have the problem with the Presidential candidates. They violate all of the City Ordinances and the process that we have to go through in order to get the signs off and everything else, you have to call the Building Department, you have to call the Highway Department. They all have to get together to get a sign off a pole, and it's never enforced and I think in all of the years that I've been holding signs and putting signs, I think this is the worst we've seen.

Mr. Arnold stated obviously if there aren't any State statutes, or for that matter, Federal laws that would prevent it, you probably could do it by Ordinance but I'm reluctant to say that because again, would want to examine the State statutes and Federal law more closely. Particularly in light of the First Amendment issue to make sure that if we were to take some action it would be enforceable.

Alderman Lopez stated I know when I was a Ward Clerk and it continues today and the comment is, if you guys don't move back 50 feet according to the Ordinance, that's what people say all of the times at the polls. And I know when I worked at Ward 10 it was the same thing. And I know Goffstown nobody stands at the polls because you have to be way out in the street. I think the intent is, and I think the feeling is, and I concur with people standing at the polls, it's just enormous and like a gauntlet and people don't want it. I've talked to many a people and they would as soon not see anybody there, let them go vote, they know who they are going to vote for, and it's just a lot of manpower standing there for nothing. I don't think any sign or people standing there changes anybody's mind when they go into vote. What kind of guidance, Mr. Chairman, would we want to give the City Solicitor to move forward on it?

Deputy City Clerk Johnson stated Mr. Chairman. Because our office is in charge of elections, I guess I'm sitting here listening to the discussion, I think I understand where the committee is going and what the concern are, but I would prefer to do is to pull out specific areas of statutory requirements, bring those to the committee, and then have a discussion with the committee about what we could do on local control and what is out of local control. And perhaps that could be changed by statute or maybe you need to lobby further up the ladder, but I would rather do the research and bring it back to you and say here are the laws that control it, this is what you could do, this is what we can't do, but our office can get together with the Solicitor's office and bring you a package for the next time you meet. From my understanding if we're dealing both with signage and polling.

Chairman Pro-Tem Gatsas relinquished the Chairmanship to Alderman Forest.

On motion of Alderman Osborne, duly seconded by Alderman Gatsas, it was voted to table this item and refer it to the City Clerk and the City Solicitor and come back with a report of the specific information.

Chairman Forest addressed Item 5 of the agenda:

Communication from Ron Ludwig, Director of Parks, Recreation and Cemetery requesting that the fee be waived for the fair license for the City's Independence Day celebrations at Arms Park on Saturday, July 3, 2004 with a rain date of Monday, July 5, 2004.

On motion of Alderman Osborne, duly seconded by Alderman Gatsas, it was voted to approve this item.

Chairman Forest addressed Item 6 of the agenda:

Communication from Ms. Cecilia Lacasse relative to the increase in basic cable rates.

On motion of Alderman Lopez, duly seconded by Alderman Osborne, it was voted that the communication be referred to the City Solicitor for response to Ms. Lacasse.

TABLED ITEMS

7. Communication from Diane Prew, Information Systems, advising that the Mail Operation Committee met to review the proposals and as a result a new proposal from Pitney Bowes was received that the Committee will be meeting shortly to review.

This item remained on the table.

On motion of Alderman Lopez, duly seconded by Alderman Gatsas, it was voted to remove this Item 8 from the table.

8. Communication from Hector Velez requesting permission to encumber the sidewalk in front of his business on 370 Union Street for sales, subject to meeting any other requirements of the City's Code.

On motion of Alderman Lopez, duly seconded by Alderman Osborne, it was voted to receive and file the communication.

9. Communication from Joan Porter, Tax Collector, suggesting departmental input regarding ultimate utilization of electronic forms of payment.

This item remained on the table.

10. Communication from Leo Pepino requesting that the Board of Mayor and Aldermen provide all World War II veterans with a medal similar to those given to Manchester's soldiers after World War I.

This item remained on the table.

Alderman Osborne asked on any of the tabled items is there any communication at all on the rest of the three others? Some of them have been on since 2003.

Deputy City Clerk Johnson stated Item 9 is that we were going to have a presentation from citizens this evening. We are going to reschedule that to another meeting. With the mail operations I don't believe we have any other reports on. I noticed that Kevin [Dillon] is out there. On financial restructuring, but that was sent to them as a report. I think we didn't receive a report back so it wasn't physically placed on the agenda. It got sort of put in there by accident, but if Kevin [Dillon] wants to report on it you could have him come up.

Chairman Forest asked, Kevin please come up. I know I wanted to talk about that. If it is not on the agenda, how do we address it?

Deputy City Clerk Johnson answered you can address it as an additional business item. It is business that has been before the committee for some time and you did request him to come back with an additional report, but it was not tabled when you asked for that, so he's back with a report.

Alderman Gatsas asked so what you're saying Carol is that any time in a committee we can bring something forward?

Deputy City Clerk Johnson answered the Chair can entertain new business at any time.

Alderman Gatsas asked on anything?

Deputy City Clerk Johnson answered on anything related to the committee that he/she wishes. Yes.

Alderman Forest stated let me explain. I was under the impression that this was a tabled item and I don't see it on anything and I had asked Kevin to come here so I was going to have somebody take it off the table. I will let Kevin [Dillon] explain and then I will tell you what I wanted you people to entertain.

Airport Director Kevin Dillon stated I think some of you might recall under the last Board the whole discussion of financial structuring was referred to this committee from the full Board. There was a committee of department heads that was put together that I chaired, it came up with some recommendations for financial restructuring, and that was done at Mayor Baines' request. Those recommendations were referred to this committee to review. The last time we met, we did discuss the recommendations and I was asked to go back and find another department that would be willing to participate in a test of financial restructuring. I think I explained last time to you the only two departments that had volunteered to do that were the City Clerk's office and the Economic Development Department. The sense of the committee at that time was the Economic Development Department was not big enough to do a fair test. So you asked me to go out and find another department the size of the City Clerk's office to do that. Despite my best efforts, I have not been able to get another department to volunteer. There are a lot of concerns that have been expressed by a number of the department heads, so I'm here to report tonight that unfortunately I was not able to identify another department.

Alderman Gatsas asked Mr. Dillon, did I hear you say that this was the Mayor's initiative?

Mr. Dillon answered that's correct.

Alderman Gatsas asked did you tell him that you couldn't find any volunteers from the department heads that are under him?

Mr. Dillon answered when it was originally brought to the full Board, the full Board was advised that the two departments that volunteered were the City Clerk's and Economic Development. There wasn't a discussion at the full Board. It was then referred back to this committee. I have not had a communication with the Mayor about it.

Alderman Gatsas asked if it is his initiative, then I would think that maybe he would select two departments to participate in this program, rather than you having to be the headhunter to find the volunteer?

Mr. Dillon responded I would vote for that.

Chairman Forest stated I know Kevin was volunteered to get volunteers on this. I don't know if we did it as a Board or if it came from the Mayor.

On motion of Alderman Gatsas, duly seconded by Alderman Lopez, it was voted that the Mayor make the selection of the two departments he wants to participate in financial restructuring initiative that he has started and report back to this committee.

Alderman Osborne asked was this a tabled item? I remember the situation.

Chairman Forest answered now it is under New Business.

Alderman Gatsas stated it's not on the agenda but we can talk about it. It is New Business.

There being no further business to come before the committee, on motion of Alderman Gatsas, duly seconded by Alderman Osborne, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

Clerk of Committee